

My name is Jaime Myers-McPhail I am a resident of New Haven I organize with New Haven Rising and I support SB284: "AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS." Last year we expanded access to HUSKY to children ages 0-8 years, passage of SB284, this year would ensure that children will not age out of coverage once they turn 9 years old. But our work does not end with expanding access up to age 18. In the long term, we need to ensure that all immigrants are able to have access to HUSKY and the healthcare they need. Connecticut must create a long term plan to expand HUSKY access to our whole immigrant community.

For most of my life I did not have health insurance. Thankfully I was healthy, but I lived with constant fear. What if I had an accident? In fact, that happened during my first semester of college. I was hit by a fast moving car while on foot, but I didn't seek proper treatment because I couldn't afford a hospital Bill. Years later I was finally able to get healthcare through my union and get checked out, but because I didn't treat my injuries when they happened I have chronic pain and mobility issues. And yet my experience is nothing compared to the thousands of lives lost each year due to lack of care.

This pandemic -which we refer to as The Great Reveal- has shown us that it's not just an individual problem when someone can't go to the doctor, can't get checked out or access proper health care. It becomes a problem for the whole community. It costs more when people have to put off preventive care then wind up in the emergency room for treatment when an issue becomes life threatening. It also costs taxpayers. We are past the point where we can financially, morally or from a public health standpoint justify excluding anyone from access to the health care they need.

Rising health care costs are a major economic threat to Connecticut residents. Over the past 15 years, families saw the cost of healthcare in CT rise by 77% – rising much faster than median wages at 21% and greatly reducing disposable income. One of my members, a teacher at a charter school, recently revealed to me his deductible is \$14,000 so all he can do is pray nothing happens. Health care attached to specific employment also stifles entrepreneurship and ingenuity, and strangles small businesses. This harms our communities and economy overall.

We can longer tolerate inaction or playing politics with people's lives. If we didn't see the crisis prior, the COVID 19 pandemic and Trump presidency have ripped the curtain off to reveal deep systemic racism. In the wealthiest state in the richest country on earth the injustices in our health care system is glaring. Our inequality was already growing fastest and now the pandemic has deepened the wide gap between rich and poor. It's time for courage. It's time for bold action we must tax the rich and foster real equity with every single bill passed this session. Starting with this one.

Thank you for your time,

Jaime Myers-McPhail

